



MONKEYPOX VIRUS **FAQS**

BASICS

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is a rare, zoonotic disease that is caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans and humans to humans. It is endemic in parts of Africa and has recently spread to many countries around the world. Scientists are unsure why it is now spreading outside of Africa.

How dangerous is it?

While cases can be extremely painful and require hospitalization for pain management, most cases are self-limited and will completely resolve without any treatment within approximately three weeks. However, people with weakened immune systems, children under eight years of age, people with a history of skin conditions, and people who are pregnant or breastfeeding may be more likely to get seriously ill or die.

Am I at risk to get monkeypox?

Those most at risk are:

- People who have been directly exposed to someone with monkeypox
- Those who engage in sexual contact with multiple or anonymous partners
 - This can include prolonged face-to-face contact through kissing, cuddling, and hugging

Is monkeypox related to COVID-19?

No, monkeypox is a completely different disease and it is not related to COVID-19.

Is monkeypox a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

No, monkeypox is not an STD or STI. A person can get infected with monkeypox during sex, however, any direct contact with an infected person can cause spread. Monkeypox is transmitted through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids.

I have had chickenpox, am I protected from monkeypox?

No, monkeypox is not related to chickenpox.

SYMPTOMS & SPREAD

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

Symptoms will often include rashes that can look like pimples or blisters. These can appear on the face, inside the mouth, and in other parts of the body such as hands, feet, chest genitals, or anus. Rashes will go through different stages before healing completely, a process that can remain for several weeks. Some individuals who have monkeypox will only experience rashes, however, other symptoms that are common with monkeypox include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion

How does monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox spreads in different ways. The virus can spread from person to person through direct contact with the infectious rash, scabs, or body fluids. It also can be spread by respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex. In addition, pregnant people can spread the virus to their fetus through the placenta.

Touching items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids of an infected person without washing and has not been disinfected is another way monkeypox spreads. It's also possible for people to get monkeypox from infected animals, either by being scratched or bitten by the animal or by eating meat or using products from an infected animal. However, we have not seen this mode of transmission in the United States.

Monkeypox symptoms usually start to show within two weeks of exposure to the virus.

Monkeypox can spread from the time symptoms start until the rash has fully healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed. The illness typically lasts two-four weeks.

How is monkeypox diagnosed?

If a patient is suspected of having monkeypox, a health care provider will collect a sample from the rash by swabbing the rash with a Q-tip and sending it to a lab for testing. While waiting for test results, it is best to avoid direct contact with others including sexual activity.

What do I do if I have symptoms?

See a healthcare provider if you notice a new or unexplained rash or other monkeypox symptoms and get tested. If you do not have access to a healthcare provider, please call our monkeypox hotline at 832-927-0707.

- Avoid close contact (including intimate physical contact) with others until a healthcare provider examines you.
- If your test result is positive, stay isolated until your rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed.

Who is considered high risk for contracting monkeypox?

Individuals (regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation) who:

- Have had multiple or anonymous sex partners.
- Are sex workers or staff at a venue where sexual activity occurs (e.g., bathhouses, saunas, sex clubs).
- Have had a diagnosis of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or early syphilis within the previous 12 months.
- Are HIV+ or on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).
- Have an immunocompromising condition that may increase their risk for severe disease if infected with the monkeypox virus, such as atopic dermatitis or eczema.

Could my pet get monkeypox?

Monkeypox is zoonotic, meaning it can spread between animals and people. However, CDC does not currently believe that monkeypox poses a high risk to pets. We are continuing to monitor the situation closely.

Is monkeypox airborne?

No, monkeypox is NOT airborne.

Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact, including:

- Direct contact with monkeypox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox.
- Touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox and not disinfected.
- Contact with respiratory secretions.

How can monkeypox be prevented?

There are several things that can be done to prevent infections with monkeypox:

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox
- Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with monkeypox symptoms
- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle or have sex with a person who has monkeypox symptoms

- Do not share utensils or cups with a person who has monkeypox symptoms
- Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox symptoms
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- If you are sick with monkeypox, isolate yourself at home and stay in a separate room or area away from people or pets you live with, when possible.

TREATMENT, TESTING & VACCINATION

Is a vaccine available yet?

Yes. The JYNNEOS vaccine is a two-dose, safe vaccine that is administered as a live virus that is non-replicating. The vaccine is used for protection against smallpox and monkeypox in individuals 6 months and older determined to be at high risk for smallpox or monkeypox infection. People who receive JYNNEOS are not considered vaccinated until they receive both vaccine doses, which are given four weeks apart. Full protection is not conferred until two weeks after receipt of the second dose. The vaccine is also available to be given intradermally with .1mL dosing for people who are 18 years or older and 0.5 ml subcutaneously for children 6 months to 17 years old. However, it is NOT recommended for everyone and will be provided to patients who meet the current eligibility criteria.

Am I eligible for the JYNNEOS vaccine?

In the United States and Houston, there is currently a limited supply of JYNNEOS vaccine, though more is expected in the weeks and months ahead.

The monkeypox vaccine is only for eligible residents who meet the current eligibility criteria and is subject to availability (first-come-first-served).

GROUP A

People with a known or possible exposure to the monkeypox virus remain the highest priority for vaccination. This includes people who:

- Were confirmed by public health to have had high- or intermediate-risk contact with someone with monkeypox, as defined by CDC.
- Attended an event or venue where there was a high risk of exposure to someone with confirmed monkeypox virus through skin-to-skin or sexual contact.
- Children 6 months to 17 years old, as needed depending on risk (if recommended by their healthcare provider or pediatrician).

GROUP B

HCPH expands vaccination eligibility to include individuals (regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation) who are at an increased risk of monkeypox, such as anyone who:

- Has had multiple or anonymous sex partners, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Is a sex worker or staff at a venue where sexual activity occurs (e.g., bathhouses, saunas, sex clubs).

- Has had a diagnosis of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or early syphilis within the previous 12 months.
- Is HIV+ or on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).
- Has an immunocompromising condition that may increase their risk for severe disease if infected with the monkeypox virus, such as atopic dermatitis or eczema.

People who meet these eligibility requirements can get vaccinated by:

- Contacting their doctor or healthcare provider to find out if they are providing the monkeypox vaccine.
- Contacting their local health department to determine eligibility.

Please note: Houston and Harris County do not currently have adequate vaccine supply to vaccinate everyone who meets CDC criteria. We are working with our local, state and federal officials to procure more and will expand our current eligibility criteria if/when we receive more.

- Residents who DO NOT meet the current eligibility criteria will NOT receive the vaccine.
- Not everyone who meets the criteria will receive the vaccine if we run out.

Is there a monkeypox hotline?

Yes. Residents who have questions regarding testing, vaccinations, and more monkeypox guidance are encouraged to call 832-927-0707. The hotline is available Monday – Friday from 8 am – 5 pm and Saturday from 8 am – 3 pm. If you call after hours, your call will be returned within 24 hours.

Can I get the vaccine from HCPH?

Yes, if you have been directly exposed to someone with monkeypox or think you are at high risk, please call our hotline at 832-927-0707. We will work with you to determine whether you are a candidate and provide vaccination as appropriate.

Should I be vaccinated again if I was or already had smallpox?

Yes, you should. The CDC recently stated that even those who have been previously immunized or had smallpox should be vaccinated against monkeypox if they meet the criteria.

If I received the monkeypox vaccine, can I relax in my protection measures?

As per the CDC, people who have received the monkeypox vaccine should continue to take steps to protect themselves from infection by avoiding close, skin-to-skin contact, including intimate contact, with someone who has monkeypox.

If I become infected with monkeypox, will I automatically qualify to receive the vaccine?

No. The body will mount an immune response if infected with monkeypox.